ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB

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THE ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB aims to:

- encourage an interest in the birds of the Oriental region and their conservation.
- liaise with and promote the work of existing regional societies.
- collate and publish material on Oriental birds.

Two bulletins and a journal, Forktail, are published annually.

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Cover illustration: Indian Bustards *Ardeotis nigriceps* by Carl do Silva.

Editorial

The recent news that the proposed Nam Choan Hydro Dam in western Thailand has been suspended can only be welcomed by conservationists throughout the Oriental region. The scheme, which would have inundated vital lowland habitat inside the Thung Yai Wildlife Sanctuary, met with concerted opposition, both internationally and, most importantly, within Thailand itself. Thanks to these efforts it seems likely that the dam will not now go ahead.

However, no sooner has one crisis passed, than another, possibly more threatening in its implications for Thai wildlife, looms on the horizon. Following a reinterpretation of the existing wildlife-sanctuaries law, which has been operating for a quarter of a century, the Thai government is about to reopen logging concessions even within the country's wildlife sanctuaries and national parks - a development that could cause incalculable damage to the country's flora and fauna.

In addition to the contributors of articles and illustrations, this bulletin involves the collective effort of Richard Grimmett, Tim Inskipp, Rod Martins, Nigel Redman, Craig Robson, Helen Taylor and myself. The club also wishes to acknowledge its debt to the IUCN Conservation Monitoring Centre, without whose kind co-operation the bulletin could not be produced.

Club News

1988 AGM in London

OBC's Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 10 December at the Zoological Society of London Lecture Theatre, Regents Park, London. As usual it will be held during the afternoon and refreshments will be available. Full details and time to be announced in the autumn bulletin.

Display Board for Khao Phia Bang Khram

In autumn 1987 a display board was created for the newly established Khao Phia Bang Khram Non-Hunting Area, Southern Thailand, which protects the last remaining sizeable population of Gurney's Pitta Pitta gurneyi in the world. The board features a painting of a male Gurney's Pitta alongside eight other lowland forest specialists (restricted to forest below 200 m in southern Thailand); Crested Wood Partridge Rollulus rouloul, Crested Fireback Lophura ignita, Blue-rumped Parrot Psittinus cyanurus, Diard's Trogon Harpactes diardi, Black Hornbill

Anthracoceros malayanus, Red-crowned Barbet *Megalaima rafflesii*, White-bellied Woodpecker *Dryocopus javensis* and Giant Pitta *Pitta caerulea*.

It is hoped that the board will stimulate and increase awareness of birds which are restricted to the last remaining pockets of lowland forest in Southern Thailand.

The board was produced as a joint venture between the Bangkok Bird Club and Oriental Bird Club, and will be on show at the NHA headquarters. It was illustrated by Craig Robson on behalf of OBC.

Norfolk Meeting

This year's Norfolk OBC meeting will be held on Saturday 20 August at Blakeney village hall. We hope it will be as successful as last year's event when nearly 100 people attended.

The meeting starts at 18h00 and will feature an illustrated talk by Steve Madge. The bar will be open throughout the evening.

During the afternoon from 2pm the village hall will be open for an exhibition and sale of Oriental bird and natural history paintings, drawings, and photos. Those interested in exhibiting their work should contact Steve Rooke, OBC Meetings Organiser, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Beds, for details.

OBC Meeting in Sweden

OBC will be holding an autumn meeting in Sweden to which all members are invited. Speakers will include Per Alström and Urban Olsson on the birds of China and Erik Hirschfeld and Magnus Ullman on the birds of Pakistan.

The Meeting will be on Saturday 1 October, starting at 17h00 and will be held at Hollviken, near Falsterbo.

Anyone requiring or offering lifts from neighbouring countries is asked to contact the organiser, Erik Hirschfeld, S. Förstadsg. 62, S-21143, Mälmo, Sweden.

A minibus may be arranged from the UK to attend the meeting and incorporate a few day's birdwatching in Sweden if there are sufficient numbers interested. Places will be given on a first-come-first-served basis. Please contact Steve Rooke, OBC Meetings Organiser, if you want to reserve a place. Tel. 0933 650755 or write c/o OBC.

Isles of Scilly Autumn Meeting

Following the success of last year's meeting, introducing many potential members to the Club and raising money for the conservation fund, we will be holding another meeting on the Isles of Scilly (a popular British birdwatching spot in autumn) this year.

It will be held on Sunday 16 October in the downstairs bar of the Porthcressa Restaurant, Hugh Town, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, starting after the log has been taken at around 21h30.

There will be a general introduction to OBC followed by a mystery-bird slide competition and a raffle.

Recycle Bulletin Back-issues

OBC is running extremely low on back copies of the bulletin, which are popular with new members. Anyone who no longer wants to keep their early issues is invited to send them in for resale.

The Lodge - Mail Address Only

Members are reminded that The Lodge is a mail address only. The Club does not have an office or any personal representation there. The Lodge cannot deal with telephone enquiries regarding OBC and members are asked not to call.

1987 Isles of Scilly Meeting Success

About 100 birdwatchers, members and non-members alike, crowded into the Porthcressa restaurant, St. Mary's, Isles of Scilly, on Sunday 18 October for what was prinicpally a fund-raising event in aid of the Oriental Bird Club conservation fund.

The main event of the evening was a mystery-bird slide competition entitled, Palearctic migrants in the Orient. This was won by Steve Whitehouse who received a £20 book token, generously donated by Sanderling books. The evening closed with a prize draw. Together the events raised £107 which combined with £102 taken on the OBC sales stall, made for a very successful evening. Council would like to thank Declan Keiley for manning the sales stall during the Scilly season. In addition, thanks to Kay Gordon, Annie Dalton and Dick Filby for their invaluable help on the night.

Report on 1987 AGM

More than 130 people attended the Club's third AGM held in December at the Zoological Society in London.

The meeting began with Paul Andrew sharing his expertise on the little-known birds of Indonesia many of which are endemic. Among the slides were shots of the paintings that were published with the original descriptions. Paul's fascinating talk of how many of these species have not been seen for decades will no doubt have inspired some visits in the direction of Indonesia.

Of particular relevance to OBC members, following support for this project from the OBC conservation fund, was the talk by Adam Gretton. He described work carried out by the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) and the Centre for Wildlife Research (CWR) last year in Thailand that resulted in a total of 16-20 pairs of Gurney's Pitta Pitta gurneyi being found. He played a tape of the bird's distinctive call, a call which, of course, had enabled many of the birds to be located. Fieldwork also included detailed observations of three nests, when information vital for future efforts to protect the species was collected. Adam reported that there seems to be a positive response to recommendations put to the Thai Royal Forest Department to extend the current reserve to include the whole area where Gurney's Pittas have been found. Further fieldwork will be carried out during 1988. Adam discouraged birdwatchers from visiting the site for the time being as there are no facilities for people to stay, although these are planned for the future.

After the teabreak Frank Rozendaal, over from Holland, showed his excellent slides and talked about his recent research in Sichuan Province, China where he was studying bush warblers Cettia and Bradypterus.

This was followed by the film 'Crane Hunters of Pakistan' by American film-maker Steven Landfried which explained the history of crane catching in North West Frontier Province where Demoiselle Anthropoides virgo and Common Cranes Grus grus are caught and kept as status symbols. The film looked at the efforts of the Pakistan Wildlife Department to get across a conservation message to catchers as well as enforcing the laws against crane catching and fining offenders. The film was kindly loaned by the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

OBC Chairman Richard Grimmett announced that the Club had over 620 members in 1987 who came from 36 countries, including 17 in Europe and 13 in the Orient. He reported that during the year OBC's conservation fund had supported research work on Gurney's Pitta and the publication of a report on the status and conservation of forest birds in Thailand by Phil Round, which can be ordered through OBC (see enclosed flyer). Full minutes of the AGM will be circulated with the autumn bulletin.

News and Views

IS DESTRUCTION OF THAI WILDLIFE NOW LEGAL?

Thailand's entire nature conservation policy, such as it is, is based upon the premise that national parks and wildlife sanctuaries are totally protected in law from activities such as logging or mineral exploitation.

Now, we are told, all this may change. A committee of the Royal Forest Department has suggested that the wildlife-sanctuaries law has, for the past 25 years, been 'misinterpreted'. A new interpretation of this law, already approved by Thailand's Judicial Council and acknowledged by the Cabinet, has equated ownership of logging or mining concessions with private ownership. Applications to reopen former concessions, which had not yet expired when a particular sanctuary was declared, will now be considered. Permission has already been granted to recommence logging in Phu Miang-Phu Thong, in Uttaradit/Phitsanulok Provinces and at Khlong Phraya in Krabi/Surat Provinces and applications may be expected to follow for further sites. In all, 22 of Thailand's total of 30 wildlife sanctuaries could be affected, including such key conservation sites as Thung Yai, Phu Luang, Khao Ang Ru Nai, and Ton Nga Chang.

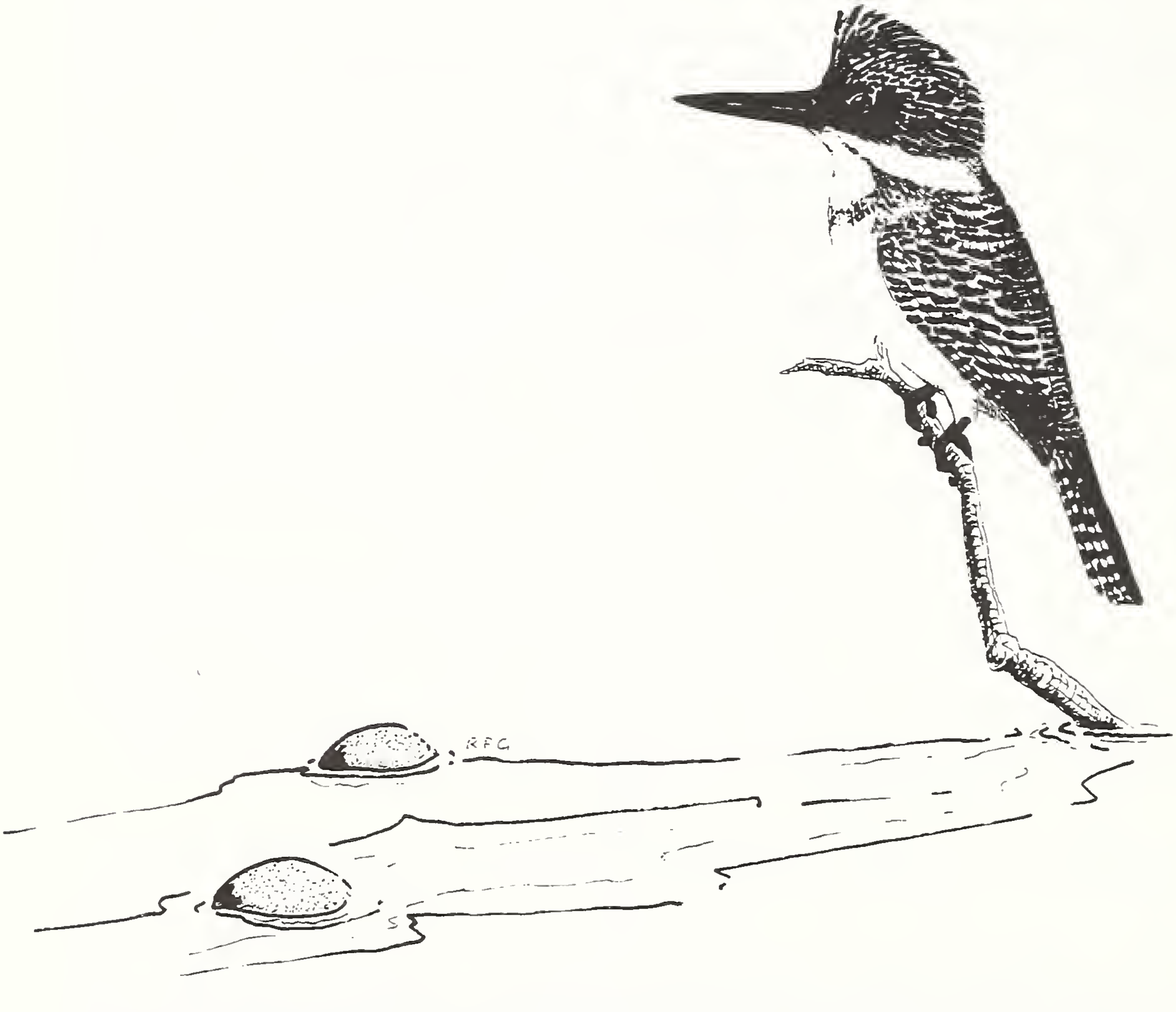
Paradoxically, the very effectiveness of the wildlife-sanctuaries law in protecting forests from slash-and-burn encroachment has put these sites at risk. As forests elsewhere have been reduced, by a combination of both legal and illegal logging, together with slash-and-burn agricultural encroachment, so the relative value of the timber in wildlife sanctuaries has increased. The timber companies will do everything in their power to sustain their profits, even though it might be at the expense of the nation's welfare. Since Thailand's wildlife sanctuaries do much more than provide a haven for wild animals. They have a proven effectiveness in maintaining the forested watersheds upon which Thailand, as an agricultural nation, wholly depends.

The government has not yet indicated how this issue is to be resolved. The point must be made that, given the continuing high annual rate of forest loss from a variety of causes, the last thing Thailand needs is an increase in logging. The government should, instead, be considering a total moratorium on the logging of all natural forests. It should be expanding and improving Thailand's park and sanctuary network, not whittling it down for short-term economic gain. (Source: Bangkok Bird Club Newsletter, May 1988)

CAMPAIGNING STOPS NAM CHOAN HYDRO DAM

The proposed Nam Choan Hydro Dam, which would have destroyed and inundated over 160 sq km of lowland forest and riverine habitats along the Rivers Mae Kong and Mae Chan, inside Thung Yai Wildlife Sanctuary, western Thailand, was shelved in early April 1988 by Thailand's Council of Economic Ministers. There is little doubt that the project's suspension was owing primarily to the sustained campaign of opposition mounted by a well-informed committee appointed to study the dam's impact. Villagers and townspeople in Kanchanaburi Province opposed the project principally on the grounds that it would damage watersheds (the massive loss of forest caused by the two existing mega-dams in Kanchanaburi is well documented) and because the dam would have been situated on a seismically active fault. The impact of the IUCN General Assembly's resolution, which withheld support for the project because of the lack of any detailed impact studies, and the concern shown by other conservation bodies around the world may also have contributed.

The principal wildlife-conservation argument was that the reservoir created would have bisected the Thung Yai sanctuary, preventing the movement and interbreeding of large mammal populations across the 3,200 sq km tract. It would also have destroyed the unique lowland riverine-forest habitat (which has almost totally disappeared from Thailand and is represented in only one other Thai protected area - the adjoining Huai Kha Khaeng sanctuary). Such habitat supports many birds which are rare or endangered in Thailand and elsewhere in Asia, including White-winged Wood Duck Cairina scutulata, Lesser Fish-Eagle Icthyophaga humilis, Crested Kingfisher Megaceryle lugubris, and Plain-pouched Hornbill Rhyticeros subruficollis.



Crested Kingfisher Megaceryle lugubris (drawing by Richard Grimmett)

Although the project has not been cancelled outright, it seems highly unlikely that it could be disinterred given the present socio-economic climate. The ramifications of Nam Choan extend far beyond the single issue and, indeed, it is difficult to think of any other recent controversy in Thailand which has done more to promote reasoned, open and democratic public debate. The coverage given by both the Thai and English-language press in Thailand has been exemplary and has served to bring all of Thailand's environmental problems into sharper focus. The rate of forest destruction has not slowed and is running at roughly three per cent per year, while all of the country's parks and sanctuaries are facing problems of understaffing, poor management, and encroachment by poachers and subsistence farmers. Against this scenario, the forestry/timber lobby has now apparently cleared the way for selected wildlife sanctuaries to be logged. Thai conservation bodies need to ride the crest of the Nam Choan wave if they are to persuade the government to address the critical conservation problems which Thailand faces.
(Contributed by Centre for Wildlife Research, Mahidol University)

MAI PO REPRIEVE

The Chinese authorities have recently announced that they will not be building an airport in Deep Bay (see Bull. Oriental Bird Club 6). The site has now been moved back to Bo An County to the north-west of Deep Bay on the edge of the Pearl River. This had previously been announced as the airport site in 1982! (It can only be hoped that they will really keep it there this time.) I visited this area last summer and it would appear unlikely that it supports much wildlife of interest - it is largely paddi with shrimp ponds fringing the coast and a very thin strip of mangrove.
(Contributed by David Melville)

WILD BALI STARLING NUMBERS HALVED

In August 1987 the third phase of the Bali Starling Project started, comprising the implementation of the Action Survival Plan drawn up in earlier phases in 1984 and 1986.

The most recent population census revealed that only 48 birds survive in the wild, in contrast to 104 during the August 1984 census, roughly a halving in three years. This population size is certainly below the level of one which is genetically viable. Poaching for the Indonesian domestic pet-market, primarily created by the better-off, is the key-factor in this decline. The Bali Barat National Park management now ponders on methods to step up protection.

A preliminary survey of some of the nestboxes introduced in 1984 and 1986 showed that at present (late February 1988) no nestbox is occupied by Bali Starlings Leucopsar rothschildi; sadly, its probable nest-hole competitor, the Black-winged Starling Sturnus melanopterus, had several active nests. Still, 2-3 juvenile Bali Starlings were observed at a roost of 13 birds, indicating successful breeding during the present season.

In late November last year a total of 19 pairs of captive-bred Bali Starlings arrived at the Captive Propagation Centre in the Surabaya Zoo (East Java) from the USA and England. The propagation aviaries are now being renovated, but most pairs already show unmistakable signs of breeding. A propagation strategy, based on a population-genetic analysis of 623 birds from the Bali Starling Regional Studbook USA, has been developed to avoid the effects of an inbreeding depression.

With the arrival of the propagation group the Indonesian Conservation Service is evidently giving higher priority to this single-island endemic. Although it seems that the species is safely established in captivity, its chances in the wild are declining. The Bali Starling Project, a co-operative effort between the Government of Indonesia, ICBP, the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquaria, the Jersey Wildlife Preservation Trust, and the Surabaya Zoo, is planned to continue for five years. Presently, however, there is an immediate need for additional funds for c. $10,000.

(Contributed by Bastiaan E van Helvvort)

BUSTARD SMUGGLING BUSTED

The disturbing level of international bustard smuggling was revealed when two swoops in Pakistan uncovered a consignment of 458 Houbara Bustards Chlamydotis undulata in the process of being shipped out of Karachi to Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

The first batch of 138 birds was taken from Lahore to Dubai as personal baggage in dreadful conditions: no food, water or space to move in the cramped cages. On arrival in Dubai, the birds were sent back via Karachi because no import papers had been issued for them. The Punjab authorities, tipped off by the Sind Wildlife Management Board, intercepted the shipment on 16 November 1987; although the consignee was identified, so far no arrest has been made. By this time, 38 of the Houbaras had died. 70 were released back to the wild while 50 others (including 30 badly injured individuals) were sent to zoos and research stations.

Two days later, SWMB raided a private house in Karachi and confiscated a further 300 birds. The owner fled, but the attendant was arrested. After a day in the SWMB library for want of other space, all the birds were released to the wild.

If prosecutions can be brought in Sind and Punjab - the potential fine amounts to over Ł100,000. The estimated value of the birds was Ł26,000.

It is ironic that the authorities in the UAE should have returned the bustards to Pakistan because they had no documentation: UAE (the world's largest remaining entrepôt for illegal ivory) is the first country to have served notice of its withdrawal from the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) with effect from 1 January 1988. All species of bustards need export licences under CITES rules.

(Contributed by Paul Goriup)

CONCERN ABOUT SUMBA HORNBILL

There is growing concern about the status of the Sumba Hornbill Rhyticeros everetti, which is endemic to Sumba in Indonesia. The island has been extensively deforested and no protected areas have been established. A recent visitor to the island observed a pair in dry forest 49 km from Waingapu, but also

witnessed two birds being sold to a hotel owner for Rp5,000 each. These birds were apparently the survivors of five taken with bird lime from a fruiting fig near the Kampong of Tanahkiri. A survey of the species is one of the highest priorities of the ICBP Hornbill Specialist Group, but efforts to raise funds have so far been ineffective.
(Source: ICBP Hornbill Specialist Group; Communication number 10)

NICOBAR SCRUBFOWL FACES EXTINCTION

The Nicobar Scrubfowl or Megapode Megapodius nicobariensis has now become extinct on Kundul, according to an urgent communication from the Andaman and Nicobar Chapter of INTACH (The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage). Kundul was one of the few islands in the Nicobar group which supported the species now separated from the widely distributed Dusky Scrubfowl M. freycinet. Ten years ago it had a viable population on Kundul, but inspite of repeated warnings nothing constructive has been done to stop the extinction.

According to INTACH, the east coast of Great Nicobar Island, which was abundantly populated with scrubfowl even five years ago, is also desolate now. Along the 51-km stretch from Campbell Bay to Pygmalion Point, a group of three watchers sighted only one scrubfowl mound (recently abandoned) and no birds were seen or heard. The workers of the General Reserve of Engineering Forces, Project Yatrik, who are building a road there appear to have caused the extinction of the scrubfowl through extensive collection of eggs and killing of birds for meat. Unless immediate protective measures are undertaken, the species will be extinct everywhere within the next 5-10 years. The present population of scrubfowl in Great Nicobar is estimated to be below 400 at the most, largely concentrated along the northern coast.

Collection of eggs and hunting of birds were traditionally undertaken by the Shompene. But now the immigrant labour population (from Bihar) has brought in better snares and traps and much better techniques of hunting. Habitat destruction also plays a major rôle. Urgent action is needed to save the scrubfowl with conservation management developed and effectively implemented.
(Source: INTACH Appeal, Feb 1988).

Megapodes - from Fairy Tales to Reality

In this short article, René Dekker discusses the bizarre behaviour and conservation needs of this remarkable family of birds.

Explorers to the Indo-Australian region in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries returned with unbelievable stories about chicken-like birds that buried their eggs in huge mounds of rotting leaves. When they also claimed that the chicks of these so-called megapodes were able to fly on the day of hatching after digging their way out of the ground, it was dismissed as fairy tales. Although it was known that reptiles incubated their eggs in a similar way, people could not believe that birds were able to do so.

Nowadays, we know that these stories are true. Megapodes do indeed bury their eggs to have them incubated by heat generated from microbial decomposition of rotting leaves, volcanism, or the sun. This makes them unique among birds. Whether or not this incubation strategy is inherited directly from their ancestors, the reptiles, or evolved from avian methods of incubation is still a subject of discussion. It is at least remarkable that a strange group of birds, such as the megapodes have had so little attention from scientists.

Ornithologists who visit the mainland of South-East Asia will not see any megapodes. In general, they occur where pheasants Phasianidae are absent, although there are a few exceptions e.g. on Palawan, the Philippines, where a single species of pheasant, the Palawan Peacock-Pheasant Polyplectron emphanum, co-exists with the Tabon Scrubfowl Megapodius cumingii[3].

However, if one leaves the mainland of South-East Asia and visits Indonesia or the Philippines, there is a chance to see megapodes. The present paper will highlight the two genera of seven species which occur within the Oriental region, with Lydekker's line between the Moluccas and New Guinea as the easternmost boundary. East of Lydekker's line we really enter megapode country. New Guinea and Australia each boasts three genera, with Talegalla and Aepypodius endemic to New Guinea and Alectura and Leipoa endemic to Australia. The genus Megapodius, which occurs on both sides of Lydekker's line, is the most widely distributed of all. The Oriental region, however, has one endemic genus of its own: Macrocephalon. This genus comprises only a single species, the Maleo Macrocephalon maleo, endemic to the island of Sulawesi (Celebes), Indonesia, where it lives in the tropical rain forest.

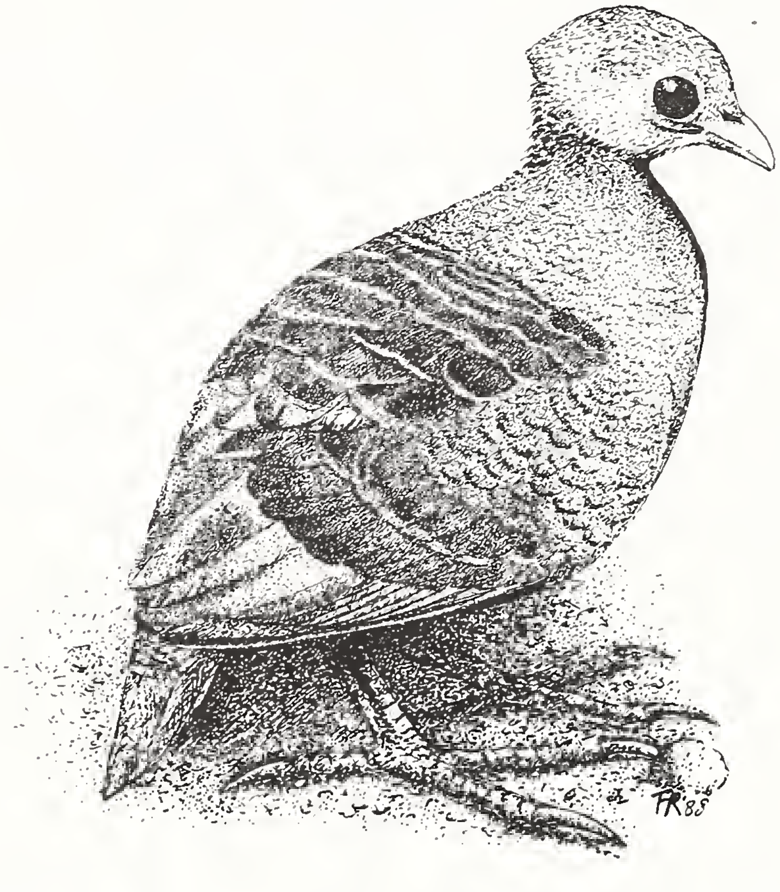
The Maleo is a beautiful, salmon-bellied, black bird, about the size of a domestic chicken, with a strange black helmet on its head, the so-called cephalon. This cephalon has been the subject of discussions ever since it was described for the first time by the Dutch physician, Dr E.A. Forsten, in 1840. Most people were convinced that it played a role in measuring the temperature of the ground during egg-laying. Now, however, scientists doubt whether this is true and question why other megapodes do not have a similar device for measuring ground-temperatures. The Australian ornithologist, H.J. Frith[1], was the first to suggest that the tongue or interior of the bill was temperature-sensitive in the Malleefowl *Leipoa ocellata*. Observations on the Australian Brush-turkey *Alectura lathami* by D. Jones (pers. comm.), and on the Maleo by the author, support Frith's conclusions. The exact location of the temperature-sensors is now being studied in Germany by M. Starck.

Unlike most other megapode species, the Maleo does not build mounds of rotting leaves to incubate its eggs, but buries them where geothermal activity or the sun provide sufficient heat under the ground. Birds from a large area of tropical rain forest come to these communal nesting grounds. The species is highly endangered and listed in King's Red Data Book[2]. I studied this bird in 1985-1986 and shall report on it in more detail in a later issue of this bulletin.

Six different species of scrubfowl, *Megapodius*, are found within the Oriental region; their taxonomy, nomenclature, and plumages have been summarised by White & Bruce [4]. Depending upon species and distribution, scrubfowls incubate their eggs in mounds - or bury them directly between decaying roots of trees - and occasionally also in geothermally heated soils, or at sun-exposed sites. The westernmost representative of this genus is the Nicobar Scrubfowl *Megapodius nicobariensis* from the Nicobar Islands (India), situated just north of Sumatra. This species is a mound-builder. The Tabon Scrubfowl inhabits the Philippines and Palawan, a few places along the north coast of Borneo (and some islands off the coast), Sulawesi, Sangihe, and Talaud. Depending upon locality, this species is known to incubate its eggs in mounds of rotting leaves, or directly between decaying roots of trees which are still alive. The Sula Scrubfowl *M. bernsteinii* lives only on the Sula and Banggai Islands, just off the coast of eastern Sulawesi. Nothing has ever been published about the biology of this species while little more is known about the Dusky Scrubfowl *M. freycinet* a mound-builder which occurs on the northern Moluccan Islands. This latter species is replaced on the southern Moluccan Islands by the Orange-footed Scrubfowl *M. reinwardt* another mound-builder which also occurs on many southern islands of Indonesia, from Lombok east to Tanimbar and the Aru Islands, in southern New Guinea and northern Australia. The most beautiful of all is the Moluccan Scrubfowl *M. wallacei*, formerly called *Eulipoa wallacei*. This species, with its colourful plumage quite different from its plain-looking congeners, does not build mounds but buries its eggs at night at communal nesting beaches on the islands of Buru, Seram, Ambon, Haruku, Bacan, Halmahera and Ternate. The Moluccan Scrubfowl lives sympatrically with the Dusky Scrubfowl in the northern part of its range and with the Orange-footed Scrubfowl in the southern part, but inhabits higher altitudes and descends to coastal beaches only to lay eggs. The Dusky and Orange-footed Scrubfowl live at lower altitudes and often build their mounds close to the beach.

Depending upon incubation-strategy, Scrubfowl species are solitary or live in pairs, which are shy and often difficult to see. The best place to observe them is usually at their mounds or nesting grounds. These sites are well known to the local people, who collect the eggs for consumption. In fact, egg collecting by humans is one of the major threats to many of the megapode species. The Maleo and Moluccan Scrubfowl are disappearing at an alarming rate. Many of the communal nesting grounds described at the turn of the century are completely abandoned nowadays. Those species which build mounds are suffering heavy egg-losses as well, but because their mounds are scattered throughout the forest, enough eggs remain undiscovered and hatch as long as the forests survive. The Maleo and Moluccan Scrubfowl, totally dependent on the few suitable volcanic and sun-exposed communal nesting grounds, have no other place to go once their nesting grounds are over-exploited or destroyed.

It is not without reason that megapode eggs are regarded as a delicacy. They are not only much bigger than chicken eggs, but also much richer in taste and more nutritious owing to the enormous yolk content. A chicken egg weighs 50-60 g, while a Maleo eggs weighs 200-250 g. The yolk accounts for some 35 per cent of the contents' weight in chicken eggs, but exceeds 60 per cent in Maleo eggs. One Maleo egg is therefore 4-5 times as big as a chicken egg and contains 7-8 times as much yolk. In a word, these are super eggs. There is a famous fairy tale about the female Maleo that says she faints after laying her enormous egg, which weighs about 15 per cent of her body weight. I have not been able to confirm this.



Moluccan Scrubfowl Megapodius wallecei (drawing by Frank Rozendaal)

To see a megapode chick come out of the egg and dig its way up to the surface is really unbelievable. By putting a glass plate in the ground in front of the eggs, I have been able to observe hatching several times. Megapode chicks do not have an egg-tooth at hatching and are therefore not able to cut open the egg in two parts like all other birds do. Megapodes kick their way out of the egg. By pushing with legs and back they break the thin shell against the surrounding soil. Once the shell is fully broken, they start digging upwards. It is during this unpleasant, dark journey, that the chicks lose the waxy sheaths in which all their feathers are enclosed. These sheaths protect the feathers, which are already fully developed, and prevent them from getting dirty with sand and yolk. Once the chicks reach the surface, they are clean and dry.

The high yolk content of megapode eggs meets the high energy demands of the extremely precocial chicks. Only the eggs of kiwis Apteryx contain more yolk than megapode eggs. Depending upon species and temperature, the incubation period varies between 40 and 90 days, or even longer. The chicks, which look like large quails or small partridges, are fully self-supporting and enjoy no form of parental care. I have seen Maleo chicks on several occasions fly straight away into the rain forest immediately after they have emerged from the ground. And that is no fairy tale!

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Preparing the Perfect Trip Report

Those who birdwatch in the Oriental region often subsequently prepare private reports on their observations. Simon Harrap - somebody who has in the past made extensive use of this type of unpublished record as part of a more detailed study - outlines how anyone, even those making only a brief visit, may contribute to the understanding of Oriental birds.

Birdwatchers visiting a new or unfamiliar part of the Orient are in a position to make valuable contributions to our knowledge of Oriental birds, especially of status, distribution and habits. Even on a short visit to an area, for example on an expedition, holiday or in the course of work, all OBC members can make noteworthy observations. It is apparent, however, that many pertinent records do not reach the notebook, and of those that do, too few are written up and made available to a wider public. Such records do not only have a scientific value, they contribute information necessary for effective conservation strategies to be formulated. That good use can be made of such reports has been demonstrated, for example, by Carol and Tim Inskipps' A Guide to the birds of Nepal (1985).

It is unfashionable nowadays for journals to publish systematic lists of observations from a specific area, and only extracts of the most notable records are likely to find an outlet this way, unless it is a very poorly known region. The usual vehicle for records which, whilst not outstanding, are still extremely valuable, is a 'trip report'. This is an unpublished account of a trip, produced to document sightings and to assist future birdwatchers visiting the area, usually distributed informally to interested parties. Most commonly, trip reports are written by visitors from outside the Oriental region, but they are also useful tools for those resident in the region who are visiting new or unfamiliar areas.

The starting point in the planning of a trip is to research thoroughly the ornithology of the region to be visited. Handbooks and field guides, as well as unpublished reports of previous trips to the area, are an obvious beginning. For many localities however, more detailed information has been published (though often in old or obscure journals). Papers detailing collecting expeditions, and regional or locality checklists can all be used to determine which species to expect, which are the notable absentees to look out for, and to provide a basis for an assessment of changes in status.

Once in the field, it is important to identify the birds correctly. This may seem obvious, but too often it is apparent that the high standards that one would apply at home are let slip in a new locality. It is well to remember that some Oriental species/species groups are very difficult to identify, especially without previous experience. There is no substitute for detailed observation and notes taken on the spot to back up a record.

The next important fact is the bird's whereabouts. The exact location, with the distance and direction from the nearest town if it is not well known, is crucial. Note that there is no 'correct' English spelling for many translated Oriental names, because there is no exact equivalent in English. Names should be extracted from the best map available, and full details of all maps used should be quoted. Altitude is too often ignored, yet it is a key factor affecting the distribution of many Oriental birds. Altitudes can be read from some maps, but these are often incorrect and should be used with caution. An altimeter, though also subject to inaccuracy, can be extremely useful in this respect. Also important is the habitat. Although on many occasions none but a trained botanist is in a position to distinguish between the many forest types, categories such as evergreen or deciduous can be applied by most birdwatchers. Also of value are notes on the gradient and the aspect (i.e. north or south facing slope) of the area, if appropriate.

The bird has been identified, we know where it is, but what is it doing? Some aspects of behaviour are only worth noting if part of a detailed, long-term study. The random and unsystematic collection of observations of feeding behaviour, for example, seldom bears fruit outside these parameters, and usually tends to over-emphasise the unusual, even the bizarre. However, one area where a chance observation can have great value is in an analysis of breeding distribution. Often a major frustration is the lack of published or unpublished material with which to define a species' status within the area it is recorded. This is as true for the commonest species as for the rare. Migrants, both geographical and altitudinal, are a particular problem.

The criteria used in breeding-bird-atlas schemes in the temperate zone to establish probable and confirmed breeding must be used with caution in the Oriental region. Song and territorial display, for example, cannot be used as indicators of probable breeding: many species sing in their winter quarters, especially immediately prior to departure, and some also defend winter territories. The following criteria have thus been adapted from Sharrock (1976).

Probable Breeding

- Courtship and display.
- Adults carrying food.
- Agitated behaviour or anxiety calls from adults (including distraction display or injury-feigning), suggesting probable presence of nest or young nearby.
- Visiting probable nest site.
- Nest building or excavating nest hole.

Confirmed Breeding

Adults entering and leaving nest site in circumstances indicating occupied nest.

- Adults carrying faecal sac.
- Nest and eggs, or bird sitting and not disturbed.
- Nest with young or downy young of ducks, gamebirds, waders etc.
- Recently fledged young (nidicolous species).
- Used nest or eggshells found. This is obviously only useful if the material can be conclusively identified.

Observations of any of these are worth recording, and should be included in any trip report. It is also worth describing details of any other aspects of breeding biology, which is poorly known for many Oriental species. The same applies to nests and eggs (here a camera is particularly useful).

The information is safely in the notebook, but in what form is it best presented in a report? The following general rules apply:

1. Give the names of all the observers involved, and the name and address of one to whom any enquiries can be sent.
2. Specify the map(s) from which the site names are taken. If they are not on any map, give a precise location, preferably the co-ordinates.
3. Give a detailed itinerary.
4. List species in systematic order and state the book or checklist (preferably the most modern and relevant) from which the order was taken. Give both the vernacular and the scientific name, again following a stated reference.
5. Unusual records and those of rarities should be accompanied by further details, including a description.

Of course, a report is not simply designed to detail one's ornithological observations. It is also usually produced to help subsequent visitors to the area. The best way of doing this is to go through each site visited, giving:

1. A general description, with details of habitat and the main attractions.
2. Access information, including, where necessary, a map, and details concerning any formalities which have to be completed to enter the area.
3. Details of the accommodation (and how to book if necessary), and the availability of food.
4. Notable species seen, and how to see them, with comments on abundance. Previous sightings of note.

A day-by-day species-list is generally the least useful format for a report, both for the researcher and the intending visitor.

If possible, type the report. If this is not possible, write clearly, paying special attention to making bird and place names legible (print these if necessary). Preferably, use A4 paper (295 x 210 mm), and always leave a margin of at least 15 mm along every side. Black ink is preferable (a carbon ribbon is best if you type) and remember to number each page. To reduce costs, be as economical as possible with space (as long as you are still clear); if the facility is available, a well-produced report can usually be reduced to half-size when it is photocopied, getting two pages on to one A4 sheet. Large, scrawled handwriting and huge maps with an excess of blank spaces simply waste resources.

Finally, having produced a report it should be distributed widely. National park headquarters (if appropriate) and national conservation, wildlife or environmental organisations (both governmental and non-governmental) should be sent copies. Finally, the OBC would be pleased to receive a copy of any trip report, including those already produced, for its library.

Acknowledgements

Mark Cocker, Richard Grimmett and Tim Inskipp made valuable comments on the first draft of this note, for which I thank them.

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Birdwatching areas

Birding in Karera Bustard Sanctuary

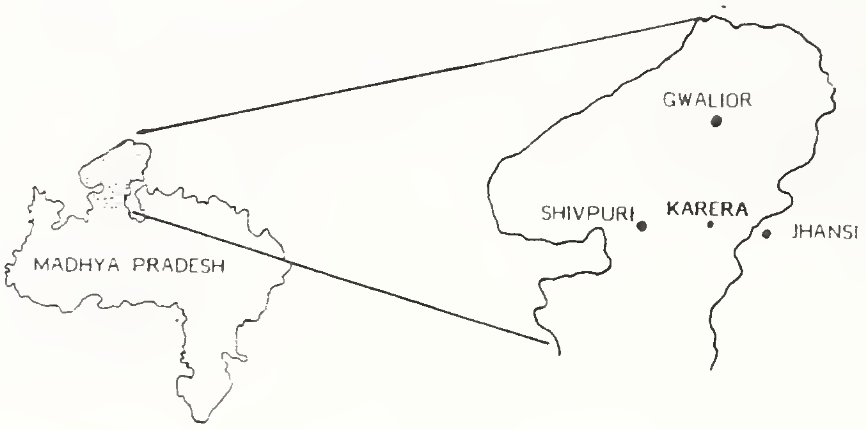
Asad Rafi Rahmani has been involved in survey work in the Karera Bustard Sanctuary since 1982. He uses his detailed knowledge of the area to show that a visit there is just as worthwhile as a visit to any of the better-known Indian nature reserves.

One of the most famous birdwatching areas in India is the Keoladeo National Park, popularly known as the Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary, where up to 300 species have been reported. However, there are many equally rich areas which are unknown to birdwatchers and hold some interesting species not seen at Bharatpur. Karera Bustard Sanctuary, one such area, was established in 1981 to protect the highly endangered Indian Bustard *Ardeotis nigriceps*.

Access and Facilities

The Karera Bustard Sanctuary is located in Shivpuri district in the state of Madhya Pradesh in central India. This 202 sq km sanctuary starts 3 km from Karera town, which is 52 km from Shivpuri and 45 km from Jhansi (Map 1). The nearest railway station, at Jhansi, is directly connected with Delhi and Bombay, while the nearest airport, at Gwalior, about 130 km away, is linked by flights with both Delhi and Bombay. From Gwalior one can reach Karera by bus.

Basic facilities like hotels and good restaurants are lacking at Karera but one can get accommodation, by prior arrangement, in the government rest house (two rooms). Although the sanctuary starts 3 km from the town, good birding areas are about 20-25 km away, near Fatehpur and Dihaila villages, which are in the core area of the sanctuary. Quarters for forest guards and a small rest house are present near Fatehpur village, although tourists are not generally encouraged to stay overnight at Fatehpur, since food and proper transport are not available. However, if visitors wish to rough it and have a vehicle they can enjoy birding in the early morning at this locality.



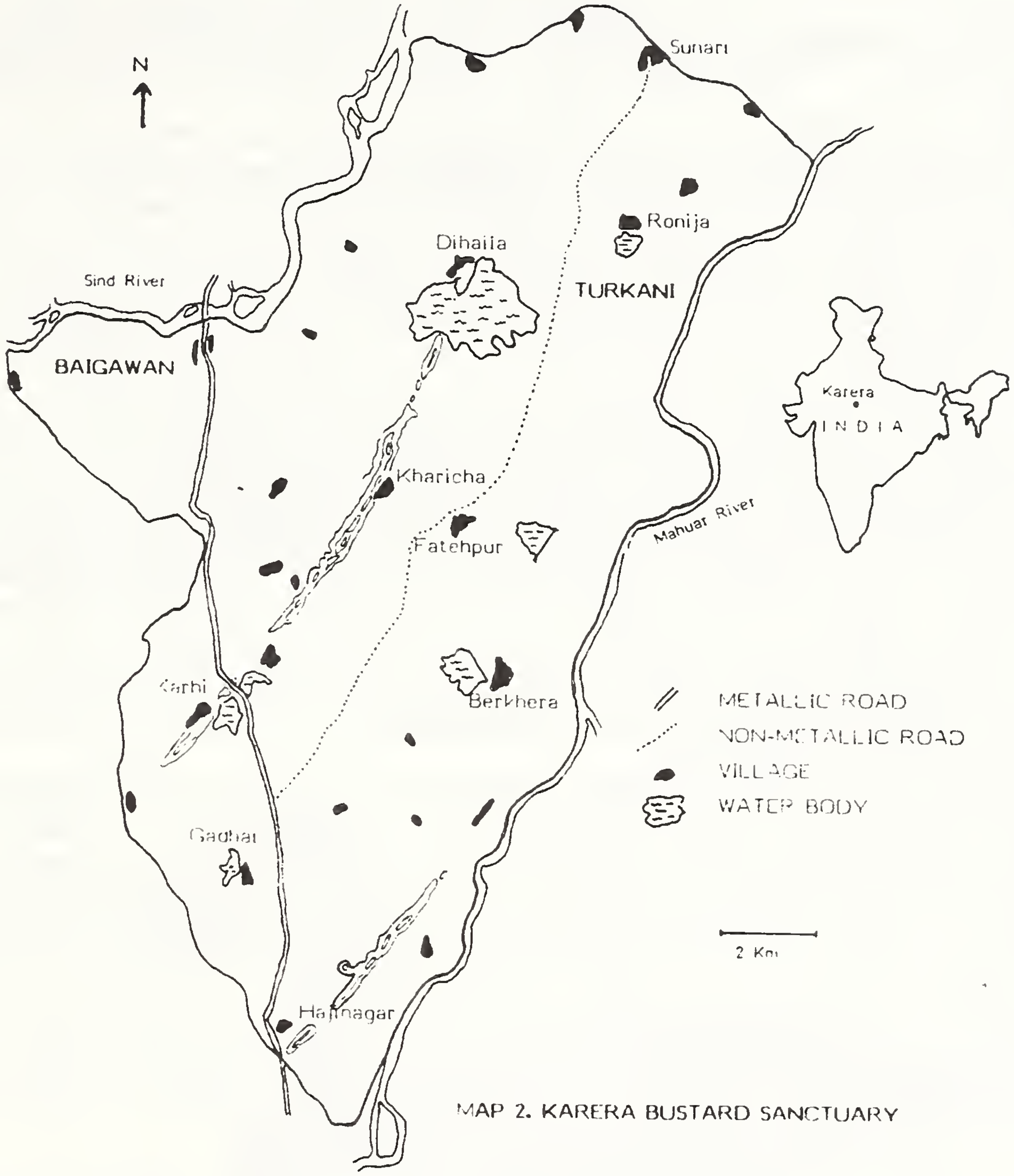
MAP 1. LOCATION OF KARERA

There is a daily bus service between Karera and Fatehpur, the bus leaving Karera at about 16h30 and reaching Fatehpur at 18h00. It returns to Karera the next morning at about 10h00. This bus schedule leaves hardly any time for birding in the morning or evening, and moreover, one is compelled to stay the night at Fatehpur. Therefore, it is advisable to have your own private transport for visiting the Karera Sanctuary.

Topography, Vegetation and Birdlife of the Sanctuary

Unlike other sanctuaries in India, the Karera Bustard Sanctuary does not have any forest. It is mainly an agricultural area with 1.35 sq km under human habitation, 145.3 sq km as common grazing ground. There are 33 villages (a few now abandoned) with a total human population of 25,700 (1981 census).

Traditional agricultural practices have created a number of habitats favouring a variety of species. Except near the villages, the crop fields are scattered and intermingle with natural vegetation. Moreover, all the agricultural fields are not cropped simultaneously, some are left fallow and grass is allowed to grow, thus providing suitable habitat for many birds like warblers Sylviidae and babblers Timaliidae. For irrigation, in addition to wells, there are six water-bodies (see Map 2) which have created excellent areas for waterbirds. Small private groves of trees like Neem Azadirachta indica, Mango Mangifera indica, Sisoo Dalbergia sisoo, Jamun Zyzygium sp, Peepal Ficus religiosa, Barghud Ficus benghalensis, etc. provide shelter for many arboreal species such as orioles Oriolus, flycatchers Muscicapidae, doves Columbidae, drongo Dicrurus, parakeets Psittacula, woodpeckers Picidae, mynas Sturnidae, babblers, and warblers.



MAP 2. KARERA BUSTARD SANCTUARY

The Karera Bustard Sanctuary has a slightly undulating topography, with numerous hills and boulders. The general elevation is approximately 750 m above sea level, and the highest peak rises 368 m from the Karera plains. In the past the hills were covered with Anogeissus pendula trees, but now, owing to overgrazing and lopping, most of them are bare or covered with stunted Anogeissus. There are two known vulture colonies in the Hajinagar and Kharicha hills, where both Long-billed Gyps indicus and Egyptian Vultures Neophron percnopterus breed. In the better-wooded Kharicha hillock, Indian Muntjac Muntiacus muntjak still survive.

Acacia leucophloea is the dominant natural tree in the flat or slightly undulating parts of the sanctuary. Common Babbler *Turdoides caudatus*, Large Grey Babbler *T. malcolmi*, Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*, Bay-backed Shrike *L. vittatus*, Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* and Laughing Dove *S. senegalensis* frequently nest in *Acacia* trees. Shrikes *Lanius*, along with the Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus* and Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*, can be seen sitting on the top branches of *Acacia*, surveying the surrounding areas for insects.

The main feature of the Karera Bustard Sanctuary is the presence of a seemingly endless number of *Zizyphus rotundifolia* bushes of 30-70 cm in height. These bushes provide some cover on the bare, overgrazed ground and occur in clumps of 30-40 plants. The grass between the *Zizyphus* clumps is totally grazed but the grass which comes up inside the clumps is relatively safe owing to *Zizyphus* thorns and this combination provides excellent habitat for Prinias *Prinia* and Warblers.

Seven species of larks are noted from the sanctuary, five of which are resident: Indian Bushlark *Mirafra erythroptera*, Ashy-crowned Finch-lark *Eremopterix grisea*, Rufous-tailed Lark *Ammomanes phoenicurus*, Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* and Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula*. Only the Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* and Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata* are winter visitors. Enormous flocks of Greater Short-toed Larks are seen between September and March, with occasional influxes of Bimaculated Larks. Three species of wheatear may be seen in Karera in winter. Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* is the most common, followed by Variable Wheatear *O. picata*. The Isabelline Wheatear *O. isabellina* was only seen twice during my five years of research at Karera.

Certainly the most important resident of the Karera Bustard Sanctuary is the Indian Bustard for which the sanctuary was created. In 1982 14 adult bustards were counted, but now thanks to strict protection the population has increased to 30. In 1982 only five males were seen, but in 1987 definitely ten and possibly 11 adult and sub-adult males were present. There are a few juvenile males which move with their respective mothers. Since the female bustards are very secretive and tend to wander more, it is difficult to make a correct assessment of their population. There can be two reasons for more frequent sightings of bustards at Karera: (i) natural increase owing to protection of nesting sites, (ii) decrease in shyness of bustards owning to six years of protection.

The most likely areas to see the Indian Bustard at Karera are between Fatehpur and Turkani, and near Baigawan village (Map 2). Early morning and late evening are the best time for bustard watching when the birds are foraging. In winter all the males of an area flock and are often easy to locate because their conspicuous white necks stand out in the drab grey or green background. Since the insect population is lowest in winter, the bustards are mainly seen in the crop fields of Bengal Gram *Cicer arietinum*, Rocket Salad *Eruca sativa* and Groundnut *Arachis hypogea*. With a retinue of forest guards and watchmen, it is not difficult to locate the bustards if they have moved away to less-frequented areas.

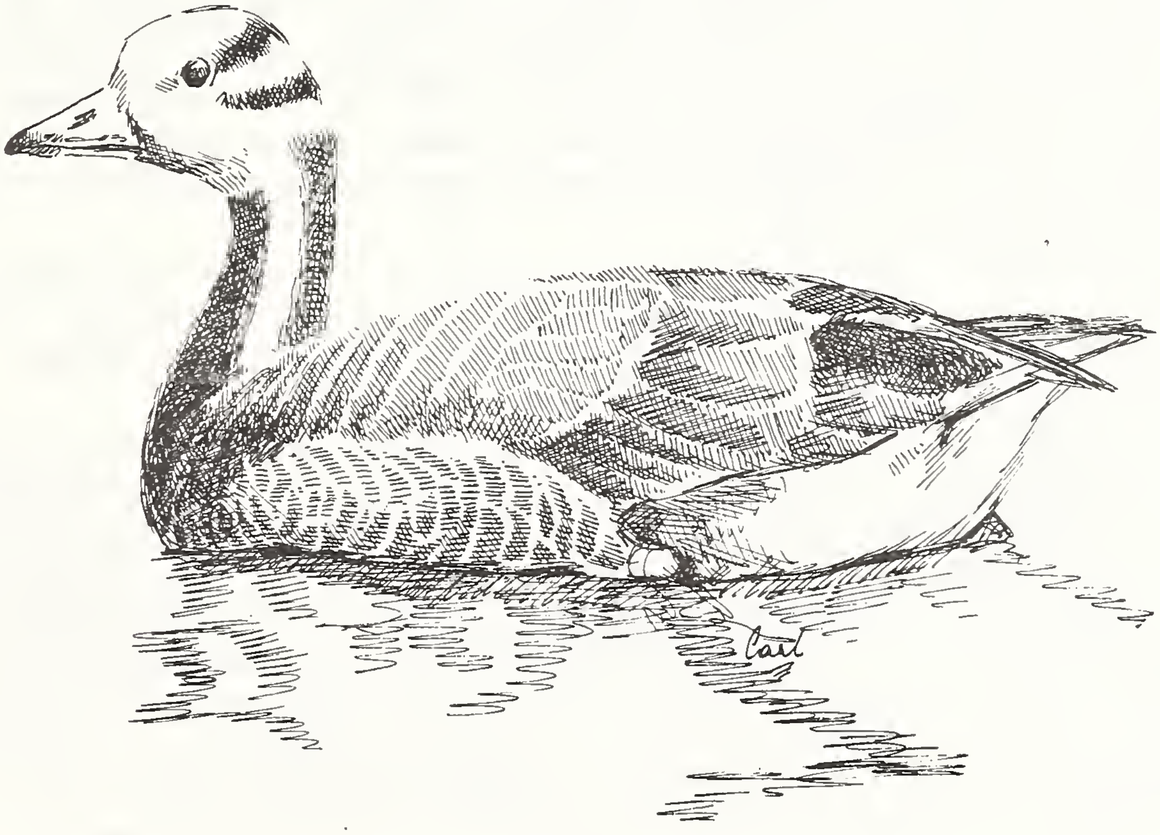
The enigmatic Lesser Florican *Sypheotides indica* - the smallest Indian bustard - is also sporadically seen in the Karera sanctuary.

During the last five years the florican has been seen at least 14 times - most records from June-July when they move to western India for breeding. There is only one winter record of a hen florican staying in the area, in January 1984.

Dihaila Jheel and other Wetlands in the Sanctuary

One factor which has swelled the number of bird species in the sanctuary to 245 is the presence of big water-bodies which were made to store water for agricultural purposes. After the establishment of the reserve, shooting was banned and thus these man-made wetlands serve as a haven for a large number of waterfowl. The largest wetland is Dihaila Jheel (370 ha), which accounts for almost 80 per cent of the waterfowl seen in the sanctuary. Tens of thousands of ducks are present between October and March - Pintail _Anas acuta_, Common Teal _A. crecca_, Eurasian Wigeon _A. penelope_, Gadwall _A. strepera_, and Northern Shoveler _A. clypeata_ constituting the major portion of the duck population.

Bar-headed Geese _Anser indicus_ and Greylag Geese _A. anser_ are common in Dihaila and Berkhera tanks, and in 1986-87 1,200-1,500 were counted. While the Greylag is mainly seen in the water, foraging on submerged vegetation, the Barheads regularly raid crops, chiefly Bengal gram. Thanks to protection, the geese have become so tame that it is not uncommon to see fields with a farmer ploughing on one side and the geese feeding on the other.



Bar-headed Goose _Anser indicus_ (drawing by Carl da Silva)

Among the cranes recorded at Karera, only the Sarus Grus antigone is resident. This majestic bird, almost two metres tall, enjoys total protection in India and is therefore common in its natural range in north, central and west India. Like other aquatic birds, the Sarus must have suffered habitat loss by the drainage of wetlands. However, owing to its adaptability and protected status, the Sarus can be found breeding successfully even in crop fields. At Karera in 1986, out of four pairs, three bred successfully, raising four chicks. In 1983, I found a Sarus nest on a bund between two crop fields. The bird incubated, unmindful of all the agricultural activities going on around the nest. Even the farmer who had cut the grass from the bund for his cow, had left the nest area undisturbed.

Demoiselle Cranes Anthropoides virgo and Common Cranes Grus grus are sometimes seen flying over at Karera during September and October. While I have never seen the Common Crane on the ground at the Karera Bustard Sanctuary, in the winter of 1984-85, a flock of Demoiselle Cranes (200) was attracted to harvested Groundnut fields. The Indian Bustard also used to forage in these fields but once the vociferous cranes arrived, the bustards moved elsewhere.

Five species of storks are seen in the Karera sanctuary but only Asian Openbill Anastomus oscitans and Painted Mycteria (= Ibis) leucocephala breed within the sanctuary limits. In 1986, Openbills reared more than 50 chicks in a small colony on four trees. Woolly-necked Storks Ciconia episcopus can be seen in the bustard areas just after the showers in late June or early July. On a few occasions, I have seen them as early as April during unseasonal showers.

One of the largest birds of the sanctuary is the Black-necked Stork Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus. It is a local migrant, mainly seen during winter. Their nesting requirements, a large wetland for foraging and old trees for nesting, are scarce these days and it is generally thought that the Black-necked Stork has become rare locally, although no proper study has been done in India. White Stork Ciconia ciconia was seen in 1986-87, possibly owing to drought in Gujarat - their main wintering area in India. Their pattern of immigration to Dihaila Jheel also indicated that storks were moving in from other areas which were possibly becoming dry.

An unexpected visitor to the wetlands of the Karera Bustard Sanctuary was the Greater Flamingo Phoenicopterus roseus, of which 40 were seen in 1983-84 during winter, and upto 63 were counted in 1985-86. A lone Lesser Flamingo Phoeniconaias minor was seen in 1983.

Of the waders at Karera we find six species of lapwing Vanellus, three plovers Charadrius, three species of Calidris and six sandpipers as well as Common Sandpiper Actitis hypoleucos, Terek Sandpiper Xenus cinereus, Common Snipe Gallinago gallinago, Black-winged Stilt Himantopus himantopus, Black-tailed Godwit Limosa limosa and Eurasian Curlew Numenius arquata. This constitutes almost all the waders reported from inland waters in India. Most of these are winter migrants, except for the three species of lapwing: Red-wattled Vanellus indicus, Yellow-wattled Vanellus malabaricus and River Vanellus duvaucelii. In some years when the water remains in the jheel, Black-winged Stilts breed in summer near Dihaila. It is also suspected that Greater Paintedsnipe Rostratula benghalensis breeds in the sanctuary.

The commonest waders at Karera - mainly on Dihaila Jheel - are Ruff

Philomachus pugnax and stints. Huge flocks of Ruff are seen in the early winter and can number up to 20,000. Out of 4,330 birds ringed at Karera, 1,056 were Ruff. Little Stint Calidris minuta and Temminck's Stint C. temminckii are the second and third commonest waders, a fact indicated by the ringing data: 578 Little Stints compared to 184 Temminck's stints in a single year.

For raptor lovers, Karera has a few surprises. I have counted 24 species of Falconiformes, including such rarities as the Red-necked Falcon Falco chicquera and the Peregrine Falcon F. peregrinus. Even the Red-headed Vulture Sarcogyps calvus, which has disappeared from many parts of the country, breeds at Karera. Winter brings a large number of harriers. One interesting record is that of the Pied Harrier Circus melanoleucos. This is a more eastern bird, wintering mainly in Assam, Bihar, West Bengal, Bangladesh and Orissa. The Short-toed Eagle Circaetus gallicus is possibly a resident bird at Karera but I never found its nest during my five-year stay there. Another common raptor of open country is the Black-shouldered Kite Elanus caeruleus which breeds every year in Karera. The White-eyed Buzzards Butastur teesa sometimes use the Indian Bustard as a beater to flush insects.

In early 1987, I submitted to the Government a detailed management plan for conservation of Dihaila Jheel and other waterbodies of the Karera Bustard Sanctuary. Fortunately, all the recommendations were accepted by the Government, and the Madhya Pradesh State Government has decided to execute the project. This will be a part of the overall development and management of the Karera Bustard Sanctuary. In a few years time, India will have another excellent bird sanctuary to delight lovers of waterfowl, while the opportunity to see the endangered Indian Bustard will be an added attraction.

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Little-known Oriental Bird

THE SUNDA COUCAL

Since its discovery in 1817 both the rarity and beauty of the Sunda Coucal *Centropus nigrorufus* have been underestimated. Paul Andrew explains why, outlines useful indentification features and speculates on the prospects for this bird, now thought to be endemic to Java.

The Coucals in the genus *Centropus* are non-parasitic members of the Cuculidae. The two species widespread in the Oriental region, the Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis* and the Lesser Coucal *C. bengalensis* are familiar birds of scrub and grasslands, and rather uninspiring in their drab plumage, short rounded wings and long untidy tails. Not all coucals, though, are so easy or so dull: there is a species on Java that, despite the island's long history of ornithological exploration, has remained elusive and poorly documented.

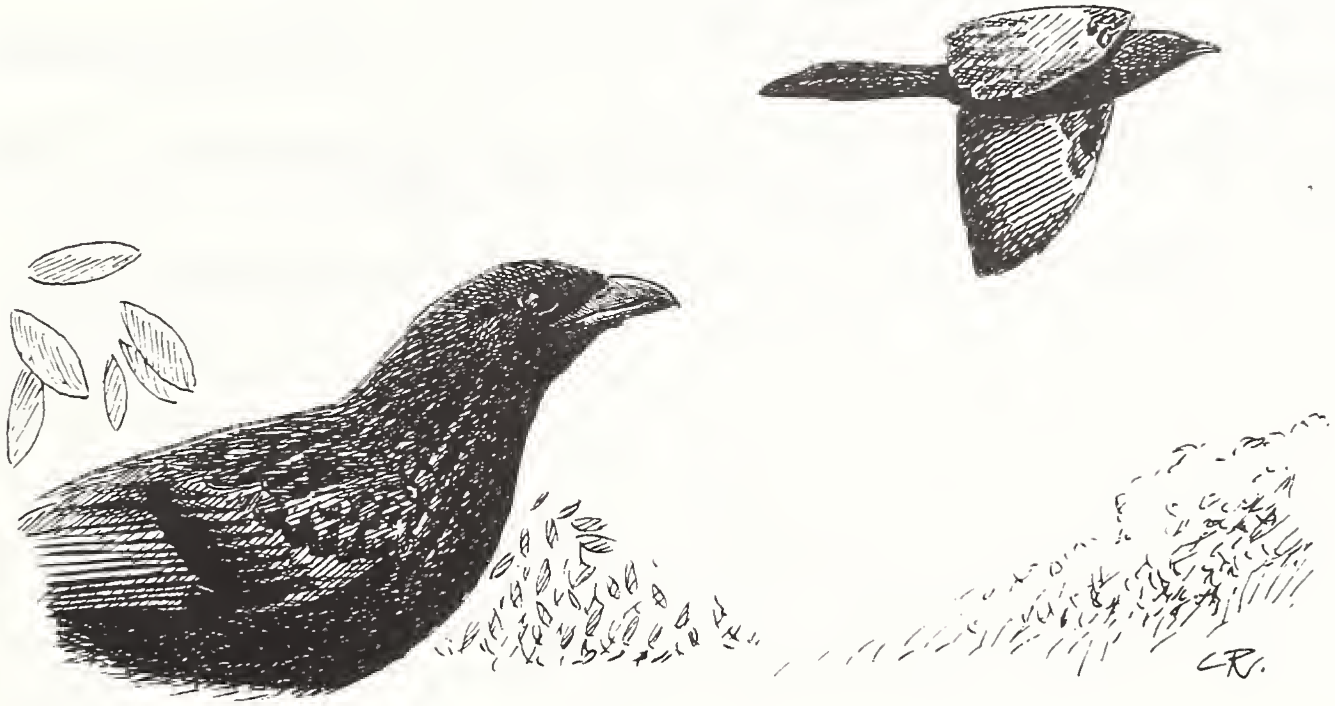
The Sunda Coucal *Centropus nigrorufus* is probably endemic to Java. It was described by Cuvier in 1817 (*Regne Anim*, p.426) and at the time it was thought to have come from South Africa, and later South Africa or Java; in 1902 Finsch [1] and Neumann [5] independently traced the type specimen to Java. There is another specimen in the British Museum (Natural History) which purportedly came from Sumatra. This was described by Shelley in 1891 as *Centropus purpureus* (*Cat. B. Brit Mus.*, xix. p.348, pl. xiii) and forms the sole basis for listing Sumatra as a locality. Many subsequent authors have included that island in the species range, but it is probably better to treat *nigrorufus* as confined to Java, since the remainder of the 50 or so specimens known were certainly taken on Java and it has never been observed in the field on Sumatra. (Van Marle ad Voous[6] have rejected the Sumatran record as inconclusive. Eds)

There are no contemporary descriptions or illustrations of *nigrorufus*. Kuroda [4] in his monumental work *The Birds of the island of Java* included a short description but no plate. The plate in Levaillant's *Histoire naturelle des Oiseaux d'Afrique*, on which Cuvier based the species, and the one accompanying Shelley's description of 1891, do not do justice to the species. The Sunda Coucal is in fact a beautiful bird, shorter tailed than *sinensis*, but equal in bulk and much more distinctive than descriptions would suggest. It differs from *sinensis* in being strongly glossed purple, instead of blue, on the head and neck; its mantle is black instead of chestnut, and the tips to the coverts and flight feathers are dark whereas on *sinensis* they are wholly chestnut. This last feature is the most useful in the field as a glimpse of the wing, often all that is offered, is sufficient to distinguish it. Viewed from below, the rufous in the wing is bordered by the dark tips to the coverts and from both above and below it is bordered by a trailing edge at least a centimetre wide formed by the dark tips to the primaries and secondaries.

Confusion is less likely with *sinensis* than with the very variable and often dark-backed form of *bengalensis* that occurs on Java, despite differences in size and bulk and that in *bengalensis* the underwing is always wholly rufous.

Identification on call is more of a problem. Both *sinensis* and *nigrorufus* show some variation in the pitch and the rhythm of the typical booming boop calls, and at present the two cannot be confidently separated. It seems that *nigrorufus* regularly calls for longer, decelerating after a rapid burst of 4-5 notes into a trailing series of a further 20 whereas *sinensis* usually tires after the fifth or sixth note, but this difference is probably not reliable. Hoogerwerf[3] describes a radically different call - a loud cackling 'kwak-kwak-kwak--kek-kek-kek--kok-kok-kok' that is reminiscent of an agitated fowl and is almost certainly unique to *nigrorufus*, but it is seldom heard and of limited use when searching for the bird. This difficulty in distinguishing the calls of *sinensis* and *nigrorufus* is largely responsible for the uncertainty surrounding the distribution of *nigrorufus* on the island.

The Greater Coucal is widespread and common but it is unlikely that the two species occur in the same habitat. It seems that *nigrorufus* occupies the tidal swamps around the coast and at the turn of the century must have been quite common, at least locally. In the Rijksmuseum at Leiden there are 25 specimens collected between 1909 and 1927 by Bartels in the swamplands of the Citarum delta, just north-east of Jakarta. It has also been collected at Indramayu, Mantup and Surabaya[1] areas, on or near the north coast that at that time would have been covered in mangrove or tidal forest. In fact, the only record of a bird outside swampland habitat is of one taken in a teak forest in Central Java, a record Hoogerwerf[2] considered unusual enough to warrant a special note. Unfortunately, this coastal habitat has proved vulnerable. The mangrove, backed by expanses of swampfern *Acrosicum* spp. swamp-palm *Nipa* spp and tidal forest that once surrounded the island, have been cleared for rice cultivation, fish ponds, and salt pans.



Sunda Coucal *Centropus nigrorufus* (drawing by Craig Robson)

The status and prospects of nigrorufus are hard to assess. It is certainly already very local and there have been few records in the past 50 years. In 1941 Hoogerwerf [3] observed one bird on the Cikarang River in the Ujong Kulon NP in West Java, and although it has not been recorded there in recent years the tidal habitat remains relatively undisturbed. Elsewhere on Java the localities given on specimen labels have been checked, albeit briefly in some cases, and the bird looked for without success. Centropus nigrorufus has certainly disappeared from most of the sites at which it formerly occurred. It does, however, still turn up in bird markets; one was purchased in 1982 in Jakarta and another in 1985 in Jogja. The latter was almost certainly trapped in the vicinity of Segara Anakan, a large brackish lake on the south coast of Central Java, which is now the largest area of mangrove on the island, and a locality where nigrorufus was found to be common early in 1986. This last record gives some cause for hope, since nigrorufus appeared to be most common in the plantations of young mangrove where the tangles of vegetation are thickest and the strands of Nipa have not been shaded out. The management of this area as an economic resource need not prejudice survival of the coucal. It would certainly be a pity if, having confused ornithologists for a century and a half, this bird were to disappear from Java just as it is recognised as endemic.

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Reviews.... Reviews.....

Rahmani, A.R. 1987. The Great Indian Bustard. Pp. 24; many colour photographs; Bombay Natural History Society, Bombay, India. Rs 10.

This interesting booklet is designed as a concise introduction to the endangered Indian Bustard *Ardeotis nigriceps*. The text is succinct and informative, covering such topics as distribution and status, population, bustard sanctuaries, bustard biology (food, breeding, courtship, territoriality, nesting, natural enemies), and conservation. The booklet is illustrated with a splendid collection of photographs, all in colour and well reproduced. This is a very attractive and inexpensive publication and will undoubtedly serve to publicise further the plight of the Indian Bustard. Thankfully, this magnificent species is already quite well known in India and is beginning to recover in some places thanks to the protection afforded to it. But there is still much to be done if this booklet is not to become the bird's epitaph. Curiously, outside the bustard sanctuaries their habitat is not legally protected although the birds themselves are.

Copies of The Great Indian Bustard are available from OBC Sales, price £1.00.

Nigel Redman

Israel, S. & Sinclair, T. 1987. Indian Wildlife. Insight Guides. Pp. 363; 236 photographs, 20 maps, line drawings, Hong Kong £9.95.

This attractively produced book is stated as having a dual purpose: to acquaint the reader with the wildlife of the region and to provide a practical guide for visitors. It is organised into three parts. The first part, a collection of 18 essays on various aspects of Indian wildlife, is as varied as the authors in content, style and quality. Excellent chapters on the One-horned rhinoceros *Rhinoceros unicornis*, conservation issues, and wildlife of the desert, contrast with shallow and repetitive essays entitled 'The forests' and 'A rich variety'. At times there is an unhappy marriage of anecdote and biological information. Eight of these chapters are devoted to mammals compared with only a single chapter on birds. This reflects the overall emphasis of the book, which is justifiable in view of the intended general readership.

Part two contains accounts of 14 Indian, two Nepalese and (in less depth) seven Sri Lankan National Parks. An accompanying map is the only continuity of format between the accounts. Some are structured under logical headings, while others are simply essays which frequently repeat ground already covered in Part

One. The final part is entitled 'Guide in Brief' and as such provides a valuable summary of basic information relating to all the parks and sanctuaries of the three countries.

Accompanying the text, and what will be for many the initial and overiding reason for purchase, is a superb collection of photographs. The strong mammal bias is continued, but a stunning double-page photograph of Black-necked Crane Grus nigricollis on its breeding grounds will be adequate compensation for the committed birdwatcher.

Overall, the standard of photography and production is not matched by the text, and the lack of a well-thought-out structure to the park accounts restricts the book's value as a practical guide. It does, however, provide an admirable introduction to the wildlife of India and with a price tag of only £9.95 criticism could appear churlish. In my opinion it will provide an enjoyable addition to any library, and will be particularly valued by members with a developing interest in the mammal fauna of the region.

Paul Jepson

Sokolov, V.E. (Ed.), 1986. **Fauna and ecology of mammals and birds of Vietnam.** (in Russian) pp. 158; 13 figs, 39 tables, 22 black & white photographs. Moskva; Nauka. 2.10 roubles.

The book contains a collection of papers based on the work of Soviet and Vietnamese zoologists at a field station located near the village of Buon Luoy in the Tay Nguyen Plateau in south-central Vietnam since 1975. In addition to ten papers on mammals, eight are devoted to birds. These are reviewed below.

L.S. Stepanjan and Nguyen Cù present a 'Survey of the drongos Dicruridae, of the fauna of Vietnam' (pp. 40-60). They list seven species of drongo as occurring in Vietnam: Dicrurus annectans, D. macrocercus, D. leucophaeus, D. aeneus, D. remifer, D. paradiseus and D. hottentottus. Identification of drongo subspecies inhabiting Vietnam is the main aim of this paper, with some anecdotal remarks on their biology and distribution. The only taxonomic change suggested is that Dicrurus leucophaeus bondi Mayer de Schauensee 1937 be synonymised with D. l. mouhoti Walden 1870.

Stepanjan's paper on 'The kingfishers Alcedinidae, of the field station Buon Luoy' (pp. 60-75) again focuses on taxonomic issues. Its main results may be summarised as follows: Lacedo pulchella deignani Meyer de Schauensee 1946 is a doubtful subspecies which may well be an intergrade between L. p. amabilis Hume 1873 and L. p. pulchella Horsfield 1821; Alcedo meninting Horsfield 1821 is closely related to A. hercules Laubmann 1917. Other species of kingfisher recorded from the Buon Luoy area include Halcyon smyrnensis, Alcedo hercules and Ceyx erithacus.

In further articles Stepanjan describes 'A case of abnormal moulting in Cuculus sparverioides' (pp. 75-7) and discusses taxonomic problems of 'The genus Aviceda Swainson 1836 in the fauna of Vietnam' (pp. 77-94).

Another contribution by Stepanjan presents 'Taxonomic notes on Irena puella (Latham, 1870)' (pp. 96-101), concluding that all the continental populations belong to the nominate subspecies.

'Taxonomic comments on Glaucidium brodiei (Burton, 1836) from the southern part of Vietnam' (pp. 101-105), also by Stepanjan, suggest that southern Vietnamese Collared Owlets should be attributed to the nominate subspecies.

Finally, E.N. Kurockin reports on the 'Olive-backed Sunbird of the Tay Nguyen Plateau' (pp. 105-15). The article contains rather anecdotal observations on the occurrence, breeding (two nests were found) and taxonomy of Nectarinia jugularis flammaxillaris in the Buon Luoy area.

In summary, the ornithological contributions in the book under review focus on taxonomic questions, but do not contain information on the ecology, numbers or management/conservation needs of Vietnamese birds.

Jiří Mlíkovský

Martin, Brian P. 1987. **World Birds.** 192 pp; over 150 colour and black & white illustrations London; Guinness Superlatives. £12.95.

In the tradition of the Guinness Book of Records, World Birds aims to document the record-breakers of the avian world. It is aimed at the general reader, and has a clear and readable style. Having a global perspective, but with particular reference to the British Isles, it is of limited use to the student of Oriental Birds. Indeed, the relatively poor knowledge of the region's avifauna is reflected in their under-representation amongst the record-breakers.

Items that caught my eye regarding Oriental birds included a mention of Vietnamese Pheasant Lophura hatinhensis, the story of the rediscovery of Jerdon's Courser Cursorius bitorquatus, and Japanese Crested Ibis Nipponia nippon in the section on the rarest birds in the world. The Crested Argus Rheinartia ocellata has the largest feathers (in its tail) of any wild bird, closely followed by Reeves' Pheasant Syrmaticus reevesii. Interestingly, the oft-quoted claim for the White-throated Needletail Hirundapus caudacutus as the fastest bird in level flight is disputed; swifts are amongst the slowest birds in level flight!

All in all, World Birds is a good, authoritative and up-to-date read but, with so many books coming onto the market, cannot be considered an essential investment.

Simon Harrap

Announcements & Requests

Chinese Egret Bird-banding Research

日本野鳥の会

The 1st Korean-Japan Migratory Bird Symposium was held in January 1987 in Tokyo to discuss future co-operation for the conservation of migratory birds between Japan and D.P.R. Korea. It was decided that the Institute of Zoology, Science Academy of D.P.R. Korea would conduct bird-banding research into the Chinese Egret Egretta eulophotes in Korea in co-operation with the Wild Bird Society of Japan.

The Chinese Egret is one of the bird species listed in the IUCN Red Data Book and has a very limited breeding area. D.P.R. Korea has some of the few known breeding areas of this bird. The Wild Bird Society of Japan sent 100 plastic rings to the Institute of Zoology, which ringed nine juvenile Chinese Egrets on July 22 1987 in Sogam-do Island, Pyoganpuk-to, D.P.R. Korea. The detailed information on the ring is as follows:

Ring: A single plastic ring
Colour: Red (inside; White)
Lettering: K41DPRK - K49DPRK

It is hoped that observers will pay attention to any Chinese Egrets that they see in case the birds bear one of the rings. We would be very grateful if you could report any sightings to the following address: Mr Koichiro Sonobe, General Management Director, Wild Bird Society of Japan, Aoyama Flower Bldg., Shibuya 1-1-4, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150, Japan.

Eurasian Penduline-Tit Information Wanted

I am working on an article concerning the Eurasian Penduline-Tit Remiz pendulinus and would be grateful to any ornithologists in Asia who can provide information on the species (particularly on distribution, ageing, sexing, and identification of all subspecies). Anyone with data on Eurasian Penduline-Tit, please write to: Gerald Driessens, Bosstraat 44, 2500 Lier, Belgium.

Nepal Records and Survey Work

All bird records from the less-visited parts of Nepal and any unusual records for the country are requested. The information will be used to produce a revised edition of 'A guide to the birds of Nepal' by Carol and Tim Inskipp (Croom-Helm, 1985) to be published in 1989. Please send records by 31 August 1988. All contributions will be acknowledged in the book.

An International Council for Bird Preservation technical report 'Nepal's forest birds: status and conservation' by Carol Inskipp will be published in 1988.

Volunteers are needed to carry out survey work recommended in the report. This project aims to locate areas of forest types which are so far unprotected and to survey poorly known protected areas. There are opportunities to make useful contributions by doing a few days or up to a few months work. Please write to Carol and Tim Inskipp, 65 Swaynes Lane, Comberton, Cambridge, CB3 7EF, UK.

New Java & Bali Field Guide Available

Further to a note from Derek Holmes, on p 33 of the Bull. Oriental Bird Club 6, readers may be interested to learn that later this year a Field Guide to the Birds of Java and Bali by John MacKinnon will be published by Gadjah Mada University Press, PO Box 14, Bulaksumur, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. It illustrates all the birds of Java and Bali in 40-plus plates and there are introductory sections to biogeography, seasonality etc. There is also an Indonesian-language edition which will be distributed - among more conventional means - by the boy scouts! It is hoped the publication date will be 5 June (World Environment Day) 1988. The publication is supported by the Environmental Management Development in Indonesia project of the State Ministry of Population and Environment in Jakarta, and the School for Resource and Environmental Studies, Dalhousie University, Halifax N.S. Enquiries should be addressed to the publisher.

Wallacean Birds - Records Requested

David Bishop is currently writing a field guide on the birds of Wallacea, to be illustrated by Dana Gardner and published by Ibis Publishing. Anyone who has records of Wallacean birds is asked to submit them to the author. Of particular value would be observations on soft-part colours, voice, habitat use, and distribution, especially concerning areas off the beaten track. All information used will be fully acknowledged. The address to write to is:

David Bishop, 43 Chester Hill Road, Chester Hill, New South Wales 2162,
Australia.

Introducing Enggang

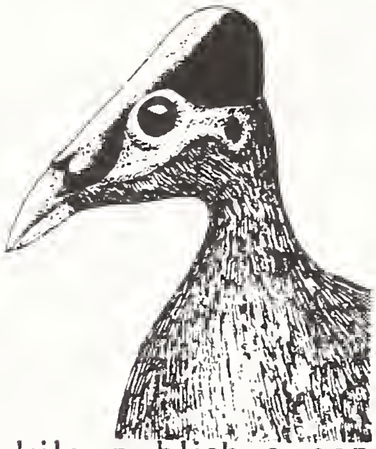
The recently formed MNS Selangor Bird Group released the first issue of its bulletin early this year. The group, an active nucleus of bird enthusiasts within the Malayan Nature Society, was established to promote an interest in the birds of Malaysia and the surrounding region and to encourage 'their conservation for the benefit of the public'.

Enggang, a name derived from the Malay word for hornbill (Great Hornbill Buceros bicornis is also the club's logo), is the group's lively A4-sized printed newsletter. It contains an interesting mix of articles, including Recent Records, Tips for Beginners, Birding Hot Spots, and Conservation News.

Annual subscription rates are US$12 for the individual, US$15 for family membership. Cheques or money orders should be made payable to the Malayan Nature Society (Selangor Branch).

Anyone interested in joining or contacting the group should write to: MNS Selangor Bird Group, c/o Malayan Nature Society, PO Box 10750, 50724 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

New Look for Kukila



The double issue, 3 and 4, of Kukila, the bulletin of the Indonesian Ornithological Society is now available, while the double issue, 1 and 2, has been republished. Both are new, improved productions. Papers in the latest issue include annotated bird checklists for the Botanical Gardens of Bogor in West Java and Tanjung Puting National Park in Central Kalimantan; an account of the importance of Sumatra's east coast for waterbirds; and birds seen on a visit to Gunung Niut in West Kalimantan.

Kukila publishes papers on all aspects of Indonesian ornithology. The subscription rate is US$10.00 ($14.00 airmail) for one volume of four issues. Payment can be made in any currency at the current rate of exchange, and cheques should be crossed and made payable to D.A. Holmes. Please write to The editors, Kukila, PO Box 287/KBY, Jakarta 12001, Indonesia.

Birds in Bangladesh

A comprehensive, up-to-date, annotated checklist of the birds of Bangladesh is long overdue. While he is in Bangladesh, Bill Harvey is prepared to act as a collector and collator of records with a view to producing such a checklist. Please send any records, however dated or seemingly trivial, to him at: The British Council, 5 Fuller Road, Dhaka, Bangladesh or, c/o FCO (Dhaka), King Charles Street, London, SW1A 2AH, UK.

Details of location, timing, numbers and behaviour (especially if indicative of breeding) are needed.

Correction to Sumatran Waterbirds Article

The authors would like to point out an error in their article, Waterbird Survey Results from South-East Sumatra In Bull. Oriental Bird Club 6. The fourth line on page 11 which reads ...mainly Sandwich Terns Sterna sandvicensis (139), ...; should have been ...mainly Gull-billed Terns Gelochelidon nilotica (139) ...

Pakistan Trip Report Available

A report of a trip by Erik Hirschfeld, Nils Kjellén and Magnus Ullman to Pakistan during February and March 1988 is now available. Pakistan is rarely visited by holidaying birdwatchers and their report demonstrates that the country has a lot in the way of interesting birds to offer. As well as providing a comprehensive list of the birds observed, there is also information on transport, hotels, climate and food and drink. The report is available from Erik Hirschfeld, Sodra Forstadsgatan 62, S-211 43 Mälmo, Sweden, for US$5 or £3 or equivalent in other currency.

'To the Editor'

Eye Colour of Ashy Drongo

I have read with interest letters from A.H.J. Harrop and Tom Roberts in the *Bull. Oriental Bird Club* Nos. 4 (p.28) and 5 (p.31) regarding the eye colour of the Ashy Drongo.

Actually both are correct in so far as the eye colour in the juvenile is dark brown until about Christmas and then becomes bright red or crimson during the breeding season and presumably stays thus thereafter. At the brown-eye stage, some of the undertail coverts are also white.

Of the migrants which come south into India in autumn, some of the birds in family parties of 5-6 have brown eyes, while one or two adults have them crimson, but after Christmas, no brown-eyed birds are visible.

As to whether this applies to all drongos as stated in the second letter remains to be confirmed but off-hand I would say that this is not so. The crimson eye is accepted as an infallible character of the Ashy Drongo.

Humayun Abdulali 75 Abdul Rehman St, Bombay-400 003, India.

More on Drongo Eye Colour

I was interested to read the letter from Humayun Abdulali recording his observations on the iris colour of the Ashy Drongo, and the Black Drongo.

It is my experience that iris colour can be remarkably variable in a wide range of unrelated bird species and is not a very reliable taxonomic character, and Abdulali's letter helps to confirm the impression that juvenile Drongos of more than one species have brown, not red irides.

The iris colour of adult Black Drongo is red and my original intention in writing was to point out that this is not a reliable diagnostic character to separate the Ashy and Black Drongos. which can otherwise look remarkably similar.

It was after familiarising myself with the daily activities of a drongo family in my own garden outside Karachi that I became aware of the change in iris colour between juveniles and adults of *D. macrocercus*.

The Greater and Lesser Racket-tailed Drongos *D. paradiseus* and *D. remifer* have a crimson iris, according to my own field notes of the former watched at Sylhet in Bangladesh and the latter watched at Sinharaja Sanctuary in south-central Sri Lanka. I see that the only species occurring in Australia, the Spangled Drongo *D. bracteatus*, is described as having a red iris [1] and I therefore continue to suspect that this is a character for the whole family. Since my experience of this essentially Oriental family is limited, there must be many other members of the Oriental Bird Club who could comment upon iris colour in other species.

Incidentally, Andrew Harrop [2] who originated this interesting discussion has recently written confirming that during a recent visit to India he recorded some Black Drongos with deep red irides although he considered these not so prominently red as the Nepal Ashy Drongo (*in litt.* Dec 1987). I do not in anyway wish to challenge Humayun's wealth of experience and observations but I hope this correspondence will continue to contribute to our knowledge of this subject.

References
1. Frith, H.J. (Ed.) (1979). *Complete book of Australian birds*. Readers Digest Services Pty Ltd.
2. Harrop, A.H.J. (1986). *Bull. Oriental Bird Club* 4; 28.

T.J. Roberts, 'Cae Gors', Rhoscefnhir, Mr. Pentraeth, Anglesey, Gwynedd, LL75 8YU, UK.

Recent Reports

These are largely unconfirmed reports. We urge that full details be supplied to relevant regional organisations in due course.

CHINA

Some news was received of the autumn 1987 migration survey at Beidahe, Hebei Province. Once again there was a number of records of Relict Gull *Larus relictus*, the birds being present throughout the survey, although not recorded every day. The maximum total in one day was seven; most birds appeared to be in first-winter plumage. Saunders's Gull Larus saundersi was regularly recorded in small numbers during September and the first half of October, and three Chinese Egrets Egretta eulophotes were present during the early autumn. The number of Hooded Cranes Grus monacha was down on the 1986 total with only about 45 recorded. Only two Baikal Teal Anas formosa were seen during the survey. There have been fewer than ten records of this apparently declining species during three seasons of observations. The total counts for Oriental Stork Ciconia ciconia boyciana (1,531) and Pied Harrier Circus melanoleucos (2,240) were well down on the 1986 totals. Totals were recorded of 1,000 Common Buzzards Buteo buteo in October, 243 Amur Falcons Falco amurensis on 3 October, 1,160 White-throated Needletails Hirundapus caudacutus on 6 September, 5,500 Eurasian Skylark Alauda arvensis and 60,000 Barn/Red-rumped Swallows Hirundo rustica/daurica on 3 October, 926 Richard's Pipits Anthus novaeseelandiae on 10 September and 1,950 Dusky Thrushes Turdus naumanni on 11 November.

Passerine numbers were generally higher than in 1986, a fall in early October producing 400 Lemon-rumped Warblers Phylloscopus proregulus and at least 10 Rufous-tailed Robins Erithacus sibilans. Noteworthy were 9 Siberian Crakes Coturnicops exquisita during late September and early October and a Short-toed Eagle Circaetus gallicus in late October.

Amur Falcon Falco amurensis (drawing by Steve Rooke)

HONG KONG

A bird fitting the description of a first-winter Relict gull Larus relictus was discovered at Mai Po in January, which if accepted, will be the first for Hong Kong as well as a very southerly Chinese record (PK). A juvenile Saker Falcon Falco cherrug at Tsim Bei Tusi on 9 and 17 January will also be a first for Hong

Kong if accepted (PK et al). There was a report of a Two-barred Warbler Phylloscopus plumbeitarsus from Mount Nicholson on 4 November (per MC). This controversial species has yet to be admitted to the Hong Kong list, despite several claimed sightings. Possible Mountain Hawk-Eagles Spizaetus nipalensis were seen in the Lam Tsuen Valley on 11 October (GCHC) and 8 November (PK) and at Tai Po Kau on 25 October (PK). These records share a similar unconfirmed status to those of the former species.

Two species recorded for the second time in Hong Kong were a Long-billed Dowitcher Limnodromus scolopaceus at Mai Po from 24-26 October, possibly seen again on 8 November (RT, PK, VP, MC, MR) and a Daurian Jackdaw Corvus dauuricus at Tsim Bei Tsui on 26 September (CV, RF, CW).

Amongst other rare species were two Ruddy Shelducks Tadorna ferruginea at Tsim Bei Tsui in January; a single male Baikal Teal Anas formosa still at Tsim Bei Tsui on 17 January after being discovered in late 1987; immature Brahminy Kites Haliastur indus at Tsim Bei Tsui in August (DM) and at Mai Po on 10 September (DM) increasing to two at Tsim Bei Tsui on 13 October (PK); a second-winter Great Black-headed Gull Larus ichthyaetus at Tsim Bei Tsui just after Christmas (per PK); an immature male Siberian Blue Robin Erithacus cyane at Cheung Chau on 13 September (MW) and a Golden-spectacled Warbler Seicercus burkii at the same locality on 23 September (MW).

33 Dalmatian Pelicans Pelecanus crispus at Mai Po by the close of 1987 was a good count compared to other recent years (per PK).

THAILAND

There has been some exciting news from Thailand's last peat-swamp forest, Pa Phru in Narathiwat province. This is currently a Non-Hunting Area, and there are moves to upgrade the last 83 sq km to the status of Biosphere reserve or Wildlife Sanctuary. Three Lesser Adjutants Leptoptilos javanicus seen at the reserve in late September are amongst the last few in Thailand. A much larger population once existed at this locality and the remaining birds are threatened by local people taking young from the nest (WD, PR, UT). Two Grey-headed Fish-Eagles Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus were seen by the same observers in August and September. This is now the only known locality for this threatened lowland-forest specialist in Thailand. One of the most interesting discoveries was a population of Reddish Scops-Owls Otus rufescens, previously only known from a market-purchased specimen in Nakhon Si Thammarat. Two birds were netted and photographed and a number of others heard and tape-recorded during August and September, once again by the same observers. Two Rufous-tailed Shamas Copsychus pyrropygus netted and photographed in primary peat-swamp forest in early September (WD) and a third seen elsewhere at the same locality on 28 September (PR) constitute a new resident-bird record for Thailand and a considerable northward range extension. Both the last two named species are considered to be lowland-forest specialists in Thailand.

A field-trip to Doi Chiang Dao Wildlife Sanctuary, Chiang Mai province shortly after Christmas (by PR, UT) produced the following noteworthy birds: Hodgson's Frogmouth Batrachostomus hodgsoni, White-bellied Redstart Hodgsonius phoenicuroides, Aberrant Bush-Warbler Cettia flavolivacea, Brown Bush-Warbler Bradypterus luteoventris, at least ten Sapphire Flycatchers

Ficedula sapphira and Giant Nuthatch *Sitta magna*.

Interesting waders recorded recently include at least three Eastern Curlews *Numenius madagascariensis* at Khao Sam Roi Yot on 15 November (JC), Thailand's third record; a Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus* at the same locality on 29 December, the second Thai record; a Little Stint *Calidris minuta* also there on 30-31 December (both PH) and a Jack Snipe *Lymnocryptes minimus* at Doi Ang Khang, north-west Thailand also in December (PH).

Good numbers of Baer's Pochards *Aythya baeri* have been recorded this winter, with 426 at Beung Boraphet on 20 January and 170 at Ban Hung Dua on 21 January (PR, BA). Three female Falcated Teal *Anas falcata* were also found at Beung Boraphet on 20 January by the same observers. Two Masked Boobies *Sula dactylatra* and a Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata* in the inner Gulf of Thailand, at Cha'am, southwest of Bangkok on 24 December (GW) were also very interesting, the former being the first record for Thailand. Amongst records of large waterbirds, upto 70 Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus* feeding in flooded paddies in Sena district, Ayuthaya province on 28 December (SP) and two Greater Adjutants *Leptoptilos dubius* following the road south at Khamphaeng Paet on 27 November (DB) were particularly noteworthy. A Brown-chested Flycatcher *Rhinomyias brunneata* seen at Bung Kroeng Kavia, Kanchanaburi province on 12 September (PR, AT *et al*), was only the second Thai record of this scarce species, which breeds in south-eastern China and winters in Malaysia and the Nicobars. The continued existence of Burmese Yuhina *Yuhina humilis* on Doi Mon Chong, Chiang Mai province, was confirmed on 31 December - 2 January, when 2-3 birds were seen there. Other good records from northern Thailand were three Spot-winged Starlings *Saroglossa spiloptera* in Chiang Mai on 29 December (RC, RR, PH), a flock of at least 150 Black-headed Greenfinches *Carduelis ambigua* at Doi Ang Khang on 16-20 December (RT), six Spot-winged Grosbeaks *Mycerobas melanoxanthos* and a possible Hume's Pheasant *Syrmaticus humiae* seen in flight at km 34 on Doi Inthanon on 20 November (DB).

A singing female Mangrove Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis rufigastra* was seen well and tape-recorded in mangroves at Krabi, southern Thailand on 25 August (CR). Up to three birds were heard singing at the same locality on 23 July by the same observer. This is a new species for Thailand and the record constitutes a considerable northward range extension.

PAKISTAN

The water level at Rawal Lake, Islamabad was very low in the early autumn owing to the late arrival of the monsoon, providing excellent conditions for migrant waders. Regular observations produced an adult Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* moulting into winter plumage on 18-21 August, possibly the first Pakistan record. Also of interest were 12 Terek Sandpipers *Xenus cinereus* on 31 July with up to seven remaining until at least 22 August, a single Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* on 18 August and singles of Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus*, and Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* all on 21 August. Records of a Black Bittern *Dupetor flavicollis* present at the lake between 6 June and 4 July and up to three Brown Crakes *Amaurornis akool* from 18 July to 5 August indicate a northward and westward range extension of their known ranges. To the south, a flock of

c. 700 Red-necked Phalaropes Phalaropus lobatus off Karachi on 13 October provided a superb spectacle. (All records submitted by MM).

TAIWAN

The only record received was of three Scaly-sided Mergansers Mergus squamatus along the north shore of the Dahtu River, near Taichung on 12 November (LC). This is the first record for Taiwan.

PENINSULAR MALAYSIA

A Band-bellied Crake Porzana paykullii was seen, and notes taken at Taman Negara NP on 22 September (DB) and also reported a week later (PK). Interestingly, a Red-legged Crake Rallina fasciata was seen at the same locality on 10 August (SH). An adult Little Stint Calidris minuta moulting out of summer plumage at Kuala Selangor from 30 September to 1 October (DB) was the second record for Malaya.

A number of interesting birds was netted and observed on Frazer's Hill by Dr D.R. Wells and students from the Universiti Malaya during 23-26 October, including a single Schrenk's Bittern Ixobrychus eurhythmus, two Red-legged Crakes Rallina fasciata, 16 Jambu Fruit-Doves Ptilinopus jambu and a single Purple-backed Starling Sturnus sturninus.

SABAH

Three Australian Pratincoles Stiltia isabella at Kota Belud on 1 August (SH, NR), were the first record for the state.

INDONESIA

Maluku

A bird survey was carried out as part of the Operation Raleigh Seram Expedition 1987 (July-Sept), resulting in a plethora of interesing records. There were 21 new species recorded for the island, including Matsudaira's Storm-Petrel Oceanodroma matsudairae, Comb-crested Jacana Irediparra gallinacea, Little Curlew Numenius minutus, Brush Cuckoo Cacomantis variolosus, Australian Koel Eudynamys cyanocephala and Beach Kingfisher Halcyon saurophaga. In addition, all 12 of the mainland Seram endemics were found in encouraging numbers, with the exception of the Salmon-crested Cockatoo Cacatua moluccensis, which is under severe threat from excessive trapping for trade. Several of the endemics were observed in the field for the first time this century, namely: Long-tailed Mountain-Pigeon Gymnophaps mada, Streaky-breasted Fantail Rhipidura dedemi, Ashy Flowerpecker Dicaeum vulneratum, Bicoloured White-eye Tephrozosterops stalkeri, Grey-hooded White-eye Lophozosterops pinaiae, Spectacled Honeyeater Lichmera monticola, Grey-collared Oriole Oriolus forsteni and Long-crested Myna Basilornis corythaix. The Purple-naped Lory Lorius domicella and Lazuli Kingfisher Halcyon lazuli were recorded for the first time since 1912. Three Moluccan Thrushes Zoothera dumasi seen at 1,280 m on Gunung Kolipoto, were the first to be observed in the field.

Other noteworthy records during the expedition included a Great-billed Heron Ardea sumatrana on Pulau Sawai, the first record for the island since 1872 and an Olive Honeyeater Lichmera argentauris on Pulau Lusaolate, the first record since 1912 and only the second ever. Large numbers of Red-necked Phalaropes Phalaropus lobatus were recorded off the north coast in September and wintering in Ambon Bay in flocks of up to 70. (JB all records). On Halmahera at least five Oriental Plovers Charadrius veredus in rough grassland on the central coast on 21 October (KDB) were of note. The Halmahera Cuckoo-shrike Coracina parvula, previously only known from three specimens, was observed frequently in pairs in primary forest on limestone hills in Central Halmahera during July and October (KDB). Unfortunately, the lek of Wallace's Standard-wing Semioptera wallacii, discovered in 1983 has now been abandoned (KDB).

Siberian Blue Robin Erithacus cyane (drawing by Steve Rooke)

Sumatra

Interesting observations in the Way Kambas NP during October included single adult and immature Storm's Storks Ciconia episcopus stormi, a singing male Ferruginous Partridge Caloperdix oculea, possibly the first record since the Second World War and a male Siberian Blue Robin Erithacus cyane (KDB all records).

Sulawesi

A courting pair of Knobbed Hornbills Rhyticeros cassidix were observed attending a nest hole on the edge of the Lore Lindu National Park on 15 October (KDB). A male Great Shortwing Heinrichia calligyna responded well to a tape recording of its previously unknown song on Gunung Rorekatimbu, Lore Lindu NP in October (KDB). This population probably represents an undescribed sub-species of this little-known endemic.

Flores

Some preliminary records have been submitted by JV, who is currently resident on Flores. Twenty new species have been recorded for the island, including Wedge-tailed Shearwater Puffinus pacificus (unconfirmed), Matsudaira's Storm-Petrel Oceanodroma matsudairae (July), Javan Pond-Heron Ardeola speciosa, Bonelli's Eagle Hieraaetus fasciatus, Rufous-bellied Eagle Hieraaetus kienerii (August), Peregrine Falcon Falco peregrinus (October) and Green Pygmy Goose Nettapus pulchellus (October). Other interesting records included a Royal Spoonbill Platalea regia in mid November; hundreds, perhaps thousands of Red-necked Phalaropes Phalaropus lobatus wintering offshore; also after nine years the rediscovery, of Wallace's Hanging Parrot Loriculus flosculus in primary forest at 900 m, some 200 km from the last sighting in 1978. Apparently this is only the third record ever of this little-known endemic.

Java

An immature (July) and adult (October) Javan Hawk-Eagle Spizaetus bartelsi were observed in the Baluran NP, east Java, these being welcome records of this threatened endemic. At least 12 Forest Wagtails Dendronanthus indicus in the Ujong Kulon NP during the 5-8 October were also noteworthy (KDB).

Recent reports cover the period from July 1987 - March 1988.

Records were collated by Craig Robson from observations and contributions by the following: P. Akers (PA), B. Amget (BA), D. Bakewell (DB), K.D. Bishop (KDB), J. Bowler (JB), J. Callardine (JC), R. Crossley (RC), S. Eduard (SE), S. Harrap (SH), P. Holt (PH), Hong Kong Bird Watching Society Newsletter (GCHC, MC, KF, PK, DM, VP, MR, RT, CW, MW), J. Hornskov (JH), Lin Chih-Cheng (LC), M. Mallalieu (MM), P. Noakes (PN), J. Palfrey (JP), S. Pleumshoosak (SP), N. Redman (NR), C. Robson (CR), P. Round (PR), R. Rowland (RR), R. Thomas (RT), U. Treesucon (UT), A. Tremongkol (AT), J. Verhoeye (JV), G. Walbridge (GW), Wildlife Conservation Division (Thailand WD), M. Williams (MW). Thanks also to the Centre for Wildlife Research, Bangkok and D. Holmes, Indonesia.

THE BULLETIN OF THE ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB provides a forum for news, notices, recent publications, expedition results, reviews, and preliminary or interim publication of studies on Oriental Birds by contributors from all parts of the world. Publication of interim results in the OBC Bulletin does not preclude or pre-empt publication of final results as journal papers either by the OBC or elsewhere. Contributions are considered by the Editor and an Editorial committee, with contributions accepted subject to editing and refereeing where appropriate. Copies of new journals, books or reports for mention or review are always welcomed. Contributions or enquiries should be sent to the Bulletin Editor, Oriental Bird Club, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Beds., SG19 2DL, UK.

Guidelines for Contributors

Whilst the Editor is always pleased to discuss possible contributions with potential authors, and to advise on preparation, it would be helpful if the following guidelines could be adhered to:

1. Articles These should be written clearly, preferably typed, on one side of the page, with all lines double-spaced, leaving wide margins, and should be no longer than 2000 words. Scientific names should appear at the first mention of each species or, if all species appear in a table, they may be given there instead. Scientific names should, where possible, follow King et al. 1975 'A Field Guide to the Birds of South-East Asia'.

   Any tables to accompany articles should be prepared on separate pieces of paper, and be thoroughly checked. Titles of tables should be self-explanatory. Diagrams should be clearly drawn, in ink, ideally 15cm wide and 11cm high. References should be cited in alphabetical order at the end of the paper in the same style used in this Bulletin.

   It would be helpful if two copies of each contribution could be submitted.
2. Recent reports These should follow the format in the current edition of the OBC Bulletin, and be sent to C.Robson, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Beds. SG19 2DL, UK.
3. News/Information Typed or hand-written contributions should be sent to R.Grimmett, OBC, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Beds. SG 19 2DL, UK.

Although every effort is made to retain all articles in their submitted form, the Editorial Committee reserves the right to make changes that it deems necessary, and, in a minimum of cases, without prior reference to the author. It is assumed that all contributors submitting material understand and accept these conditions.

For News and Views, book reviews, announcements and letters, the deadline for submission of material is 1 March (spring bulletin) and 1 September (autumn bulletin). Recent reports are needed one month earlier. The deadlines do not apply to the main articles which will be published as soon as possible after acceptance by the Editorial Committee.

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